

AUGUST 31, 1976

THE SINAI AGREEMENT -- A YEAR AFTER

ANNCR: A YEAR AGO TOMORROW (WEDNESDAY) EGYPT AND ISRAEL INITIALLED AN INTERIM AGREEMENT DESIGNED TO IMPROVE THE CHANCES OF PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. NEWS ANALYST FRED GALVAN HAS THESE THOUGHTS:

VOICE: ANNIVERSARIES, BY THEIR VERY NATURE, ARE A TIME OF ASSESSMENT -- PARTICULARLY ANNIVERSARIES OF AGREEMENTS BETWEEN NATIONS WHICH AFFECT THEIR POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INTERESTS. SUCH AN AGREEMENT WAS THE ONE INITIALLED BY EGYPTIAN AND ISRAELI NEGOTIATORS ON SEPTEMBER FIRST OF LAST YEAR THAT WAS NEGOTIATED WITH THE PERSISTENT AND DECISIVE HELP OF THE UNITED STATES.

HOW WELL THE EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI ACCORD HAS WORKED IS ILLUSTRATED BY THE FACT THAT IN THE INTERVENING TWELVE MONTHS, THE THREAT OF WAR BETWEEN THEM HAS APPRECIABLY DIMINISHED. HOWEVER CERTAIN FACTS MUST BE UNDERSTOOD IF THE AGREEMENT IS TO BE ACCURATELY EVALUATED. IN THE FIRST PLACE, IT IS NOT AN ARRANGEMENT FOR PERMANENT PEACE. MANY ISSUES STILL HAMPER GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL AND BETWEEN ISRAEL AND OTHER ARAB STATES. A STABLE, PERMANENT MIDDLE EAST PEACE IS STILL IN THE FUTURE.

BUT THE PERFORMANCE OF BOTH PARTIES TO THE INTERIM AGREEMENT JUSTIFIES HOPE THAT AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING, THE SITUATION IN THE SINAI IS STABLE. AND THAT, IN TURN, GIVES HOPE THAT THE TIME BOUGHT BY THE SINAI AGREEMENT COULD LEAD TO FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND OTHER ARAB NATIONS, AND, EVENTUALLY, THE LONG-RANGE GOAL OF ALL OF THEM-- GENUINE PEACE IN THEIR AREA.

WHILE THESE ASSESSMENTS AND HOPES ARE WIDELY RECOGNIZED, THE INTERIM AGREEMENT IS NOT WITHOUT CRITICS IN BOTH THE ARAB WORLD AND ISRAEL. SOME ISRAELI CRITICS SAY THAT IT HAS FAILED TO PRODUCE AN ADDITIONAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND SYRIA. AND THEY SAY THAT THE AGREEMENT IN FACT DID NOT END THE STATE OF WAR BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL. SOME ARAB CRITICS NOTE THAT THE AGREEMENT STILL LEAVES IN SUSPENSION TWO BASIC ISSUES--THE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIANS AND THE FAILURE OF ISRAEL TO RETURN THE ARAB LANDS IT SEIZED IN 1967. BUT ADVOCATES OF THE AGREEMENT EMPHASIZE THAT IN ITS FIRST YEAR NOT A SINGLE EGYPTIAN OR ISRAELI SOLDIER HAS DIED OR BEEN WOUNDED IN THE SINAI OR ELSEWHERE ALONG THEIR BORDERS. TECHNICAL VIOLATIONS OF THE AGREEMENT'S MILITARY CLAUSES HAVE BEEN DISMISSED BY BOTH SIDES AS MISUNDERSTANDINGS. CONTRIBUTING TO THEIR SENSE OF SECURITY HAS BEEN THE EXTENDED UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING FORCE AND THE AMERICAN-MANNED ELECTRONIC LOOKOUT POSTS IN THE SINAI.

SECRETARY KISSINGER RECENTLY RECOGNIZED THAT NO AGREEMENT OF SUCH COMPLEXITY COULD SATISFY EVERYBODY FULLY. BUT, HE ADDED, "THE AGREEMENT HAS BEEN ON THE WHOLE WELL OBSERVED. I THINK IT HAS LED TO A CONSIDERABLE EASING OF TENSIONS AND," HE SAID, "HAS SET IN MOTION A PROCESS WHICH, IF FINISHED, WOULD LEAD TO FURTHER SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS TOWARDS PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST."

AND SO THE SINAI AGREEMENT STANDS AS A MONUMENT--AT LEAST FOR NOW--TO THE GOOD WILL AND GOOD FAITH BOTH EGYPT AND ISRAEL HAVE DEMONSTRATED. IF UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES IT CANNOT BE SAID TO ASSURE IN THE NEAR FUTURE A MORE STABLE ARRANGEMENT BETWEEN THEM AND BETWEEN ISRAEL AND OTHER ARAB NATIONS, AT LEAST IT IS STILL IN FULL OPERATION. AND AS SUCH IT CONTINUES TO SERVE

AS A MODEL OF DYNAMIC ELEMENTS THAT COULD LEAD TO AN EVENTUAL ERA OF PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. AND THAT, ULTIMATELY, IS THE DESIRE OF THE ARAB STATES, OF ISRAEL, THE UNITED STATES AND ALL OTHERS INTERESTED IN THE FUTURE OF THE AREA.

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